

Remarks for UCLA Annual Gala
May 1, 2012

As a UCLA graduate and a proud friend of the UCLA Hillel, I am delighted to be here tonight to pay tribute to our exceptional honorees.

First, I'd like to thank Rabbi Chaim Seidler-Feller for his friendship and his leadership. UCLA Hillel is the home away from home for Jewish students on campus. It is a source of pride to all Bruin alumni to see UCLA's Hillel become such a spiritual and social anchor. You have done a remarkable job in cultivating a vibrant community of students who come to Hillel to rest, relax and revive. You are a role model and mentor and we thank you for that.

Now, to speak of the honorees. Let me begin with Sarah Baron and David Bocarsly, whom I have had the pleasure of welcoming to my office on a number of occasions. Sarah, as President of the UCLA Hillel Student Board, and David, as an active member of Bruins for Israel, are remarkable young leaders.

We all benefit from the tireless work they have done to engage student government leaders, faculty and other opinion leaders on campus. Their work to build coalitions has helped UCLA withstand the divisive anti-Israel campaigns that have unfortunately plagued other campuses in the UC system. Disagreeing with Israel is one thing, but singling out Israel for boycotts and divestment and launching ad hominem attacks against Israelis and pro-Israel students is something entirely different. Sarah and David deserve our thanks and recognition for their efforts to keep students informed and focused on facts, history and principle.

Having started out myself as a student activist at UCLA, I know first-hand about the commitment of time and energy and sacrifice that you have given. I also know about the reward. Not only the reward of knowing I made a difference, but knowing the friends I made as a campus activist would be my friends and political allies throughout my

career. Sarah and David I hope that your roots at UCLA stay firm and support you in your future endeavors.

We also pay tribute to honorees Gail Katz and Bruce Wessel. Gail and Bruce are celebrated for their professional accomplishments at the height of their fields in the film industry and in law. Tonight we honor them for their tremendous contributions of time and support to UCLA Hillel, among the many causes they hold dear.

I've known Bruce since his days starting out on Capitol Hill. You and Gail have earned a reputation for stepping forward, ready to invest your talent and creativity with leadership roles in Hillel, in the arts, in international humanitarian efforts, and in Bet Tzedek's Legal Aid service. It is especially clear that your connection to UCLA Hillel and Rabbi Seidler-Feller is very personal and enduring. You have celebrated many special milestones together and I hope you and your family will continue to give and gain warmth and strength from these special ties.

Last, but not least, it is a special honor to congratulate my dear friends Dick and Lois Gunther. My wife Janet and I have enjoyed their friendship for so many years and I couldn't think of better name for an award for them than UCLA Hillel's "Honorable Menschen."

So much of the Gunther's charitable efforts are about volunteering themselves and volunteering their time. So many of the organizations they support exemplify the Jewish values of humanity and human dignity. They embody the epitome of *menschlichkeit*, which is the recognition that every man is made from the same cloth, in the image of G-d.

From their work with the Jewish Family Service and the Los Angeles Jewish Federation to the AARP, Dick and Lois are committed to making sure that there is a safety net so that no one is left behind in our community and in our society. Their work with the Grameen

Foundation helps the world's poorest of the poor, many living on less than a dollar a day, to make a living and a future.

They were active in the Soviet Jewry movement and with Project Renewal, a program to redevelop impoverished communities in Israel. And their family foundation has strengthened numerous institutions that promote science, education and the arts in Israel, Los Angeles and beyond.

Their humanity is also an underpinning of their dedicated leadership and involvement in pro-Israel and pro-peace organizations. It stems from their genuine and deep concern over wanting a Jewish State and a Palestinian state that are able to live side-by-side in peace, security and dignity.

Their activism in progressive causes is based on conscience, conviction and integrity. As supporters of UCLA Hillel's social justice programs, they are raising up future generations of activists to follow their example.

With 65 years of marriage, success in business, adventures around the world, and a beautiful family of children and grandchildren, we all have a great deal to admire in Dick and Lois. And we have a great deal to thank them for.

Congratulations to you and your fellow honorees. And congratulations to the UCLA Hillel, which is stronger because of supporters like you.



About Our Honorees

Gail Katz and Bruce Wessel are returning to the Sephardic Temple where they were married by Hillel's Executive Director, Rabbi Chaim Seidler-Feller, 25 years ago. Gail and Bruce's appreciation for community, social connection and student development has turned their involvement with Hillel into a lifelong relationship.

A native of Los Angeles, Gail Katz has produced feature films that have grossed nearly \$1.5 billion in box office receipts. Her producing credits include *The Perfect Storm*, *Air Force One*, *Outbreak*, *In the Line of Fire*, *Mighty Joe Young*, and *Bicentennial Man*, and in television, she was Executive Producer of series *Casimere Mafia* and *The Agency*. Gail earned her MBA from the Yale School of Management, and BA in Economics and Political Science from the University of California at Berkeley. Presently, Gail heads up Gail Katz Productions and is Adjunct Professor of Production at the USC School of Cinematic Arts. She is a member of the Board of Trustees of the Santa Monica Museum of Art and serves on the Board of Ambassadors of Mercy Corps, an international humanitarian organization.

Bruce Wessel is a partner in Irell & Manella LLP, where he is a member of the litigation group and serves on the firm's executive committee. Bruce joined Irell in 1986 after he finished his clerkship with the Honorable Edward Rafeedie, a United States District Court Judge for the Central District of California. In 1984, he graduated from Yale Law School. Between college and law school, Bruce was a Coro Fellow in Los Angeles, served as a speechwriter for the Chairman of the Board and CEO of Pacific Life, ran a successful congressional campaign in Eastern Connecticut, and worked in the United States House of Representatives as a special assistant to United States Congressman Sam Goldenson. Bruce serves on the Board of Directors of Bet Tzedek Legal Services and the Los Angeles Chapter of the Crohn's and Colitis Foundation of America.

You are cordially invited to attend the

Hillel at UCLA Annual Gala

Tuesday, May 1, 2012

Sephardic Temple Tifereth Israel
10570 Wilshire Boulevard, Los Angeles

Honoring

Gail Katz and Bruce Wessel

Honorable Menschen

Lois and Richard Gunther

Outstanding Student Awardees

Sarah Baron and David Bocarsly

6:00 pm – 7:00 pm

Cocktail Reception

6:30pm Torah Text Study

with Rabbi Chaim Seidler-Feller

*What Does God Desire of You – 10 ISSUES
Social Justice in a Postmodern World*

7:00 pm

Dinner and Program

*Dietary Laws Observed?
Business After*



About Our Honorable Menschen

Lois and Richard Gunther epitomize *tikkun olam* – repairing the world in our local community and beyond with their time and talents. Strong supporters of Hillel's social justice programs, the Gunthers are valued members of our Board of Trustees and have shared their expertise with our students by lecturing on leadership and community involvement.

Richard graduated from UCLA in 1948 and later earned a Masters in Liberal Arts from USC in 1974. After years of business in construction, real estate development, and investments, he turned his attention to public service with Lois by his side. Some of his achievements include creating the "Legacy Award" with AARP, supporting the worldwide efforts of the Grameen Foundation USA, which provides microloans in developing countries, and chairing various committees that led to a rescue operation for Soviet Jewry (Operation Exodus), revitalization of two Israeli communities (Project Renewal), and reorganization of the Los Angeles Jewish community, respectively. In addition to service in non-profit and political spheres, he is an author, speaker and outdoorsman.

Lois herself attended UCLA and has been energetically involved in public service with Jewish Family Service of Los Angeles, the American Jewish Committee, the Los Angeles Jewish Federation Council, and the Skirball Cultural Center, to name a few.

The Gunthers have been married since 1947, have three sons and three grandchildren, and continue to enjoy the pursuit of service and adventure. They have bicycled extensively in the U.S., Europe, Asia, and South America, and have trekked several times in the Himalayas, the Andes, and with their children climbed Mts. Fuji, Kilimanjaro, and Whitney.



Our Emcee

We're thrilled to have actress, speaker, and author, **Mayim Bialik**, as our emcee. She currently stars as Amy Farrah Fowler in the CBS hit *The Big Bang Theory*, and is well-known for her lead role in the 90's sitcom *Blossom* as well as her portrayal of a young Bette Midler in the film *Beaches*.

Mayim received a B.S. in Neuroscience and Hebrew and Jewish Studies from UCLA in 2000, and earned a Ph.D. in Neuroscience from UCLA in 2007. She is a wife, mother of two sons and educator with interests in holistic parenting/living and in Jewish values. She can now add author to her list of credentials as her first book, *Beyond the Sling: A Real-Life Guide to Raising Confident, Loving Children the Attachment Parenting Way*, was released in March 2012. Mayim has been a fixture at Hillel since her time at UCLA in the late 90's, and she continues to be a dynamic partner, especially during High Holy Days when she shares her talents by blowing the shofar.



Mission

Hillel at UCLA's mission is to enrich the lives of students so that they may enrich the Jewish people and the world.

Hillel is the premier Jewish student organization at UCLA and helps students expand Jewish knowledge, hone leadership skills, bolster ties to Israel, and volunteer in social justice projects. Just as the University establishes a professional foundation for students' futures, Hillel builds a Jewish foundation for their lifetime. Hillel equips today's students to be the leaders of tomorrow's Jewish community.

Yitzhak Rabin Hillel Center for Jewish Life at UCLA

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Hillel is sponsored by the Los Angeles Hillel Council, a beneficiary agency of the Jewish Federation Council of Greater Los Angeles and is a member of the University Religious Conference, UCLA.

Hillel at UCLA Annual Gala

Honoring

Gail Katz and Bruce Wessel

Honorable Mentees

Lois and Richard Gunther

Outstanding Student Awardees

Sarah Baron and David Bocarsly